‘Personal friendships, professional manoeuvres: Edward Elgar in Russia before and after 1917’

Thanks to a surge of interest over the last ten years or so, we know quite a lot about the performance of Russian music in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England: who championed it, what was performed, how it was received in the press, and who the main conduits were.[1] We know, for instance, that Petr Chaikovskii was given an honorary doctorate by Cambridge University in 1893; that his music had been regularly performed in London in the preceding decadesand that both Chaikovskii and Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov were very well known, not only in London concert circles, but in musical England generally by the end of the nineteenth century. As Philip Ross Bullock has noted, the English discovery of Russian music came hard on the heels of translations of Russian literature in the wake of the Crimean War, and tropes of what constituted ‘Russianness’ became tightly woven into British cultural discourse on both Russian literature and music by the end of the nineteenth century. Whether casting Russia as barbarian ‘other’ or praising it as a purveyor of exotic brilliance, British writings on music from the nineteenth century right up to the Soviet period generally slotted in somewhere on this spectrum of ‘othering’ Russian music, even if the tone was flattering rather than critical (it could be either depending on the critic).[2] However patchy we might regard this ‘mainstreaming’ of Chaikovskii, Anton Rubinshtein and Rimskii-Korsakov, Russian music was well integrated into British concert life by the end of the nineteenth century, even if there were still major belated discoveries to be made in the twentieth.

By contrast, nothing is known of how English music was received in Russia at the same time, or even if it was heard at all. On a practical level, this is a lacuna that this article

seeks partially to fill, specifically in relation to Elgar; but it also aims to show that, just as English reviews mused on the nature of 'Russianness', the Russian reception of English music also conveys a sense of how musical 'Englishness' was defined in Russian cultural circles in the early twentieth century, and would continue to be so right into the Soviet era. For while it would probably be too strong to read a kind of 'occidentalism' in Russian reviews – especially given the small sample presented here – a note of caution is nonetheless perceptible; a sense that English music can be given a polite hearing, but was never likely to sit alongside the Austro-German, French, Italian (and, of course, Russian) greats. Tracking Elgar's reception through to the Stalin era provides a useful barometer of Russian attitudes to English music, even though the restrictions of the mature Stalin years mean that very little can be inferred simply by lack of performance and reception history alone.

Edward Elgar was easily the most famous of English composers to be played in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century (discounting Henry Purcell and the naturalized German composer George Frederick Handel), and this holds true all the way up to Benjamin Britten's visits in the 1960s. And he was no parochial talent, either. At the start of our chronology, in 1903, Elgar had the most promising international reputation of any British composer of his generation. Richard Strauss's remark, on hearing the oratorio The Dream of Gerontius (1900), that Elgar was the 'first progressive English musician' underlines the extent to which Elgar was seen as something out of the ordinary (at least, for a British composer) in elite European and American musical circles; and as will be revealed, it was his early European reputation that piqued the interest of one of Russia's most extraordinary musicians and concert directors, Aleksandr Ziloti. Indeed, it was this connection – forged early in Elgar's international career – that lingered as a fragmentary legacy of Elgar performance in the first twenty-five years of the Soviet regime. Following the trail of the Ziloti-Elgar relationship reveals that personal connections – reputation, assessment by peers

and links with major performers – were key to Elgar's introduction to Russia; but also shows that audience and critical reception of new works was equally vital in securing a permanent repertoire position. As will be seen, Elgar's reputation in Russia was still fragile when the October revolution turned Russian musical life on its head; and despite post-1917 personal connections surviving this rupture, it was too fragile to survive the combination of sweeping personnel changes and shifts in cultural fashion after the First World War.

Aleksandr Ziloti, originally a pupil of Nikolai Rubinshtein (and a composition student of Chaikovskii) began his career as a pianist, and trained with Liszt in Weimar. Upon returning to Russia in 1886 he continued to concertize internationally.[3] It is unclear when he first began to conduct professionally – probably in the 1901-02 Moscow Philharmonia season – but the first confirmed date with that orchestra was 9 February 1902, when Ziloti performed Sergei Taneev's Fourth Symphony.[4] However, his conducting was apparently judged not an unqualified success and Ziloti was not re-engaged after March 1903. Finding himself out of a job, he then moved with his family to St Petersburg, where – with the help of his wife's inherited wealth (Vera Ziloti was the daughter of the magnate and art collector Pavel Tret′iakov), and backing from business sponsors – Ziloti founded his own concert series at the Hall of the Nobility (now the Philharmonic Hall) on Nevskii Prospekt.

Ziloti's concerts were not, of course, the only private series running in the capital. The Russian Musical Society (founded 1859) was still giving regular concerts, and the Evenings of Contemporary Music (founded by the critics Viacheslav Karatygin, Val′ter Nuvel and Al′fred Nurok) had already established a reputation for progressive repertoire and ran alongside Ziloti's series until 1912.[5] There was also the (by 1900) famously conservative 'Russian Symphony Orchestra' concert series, which was founded as a vehicle for the performance of works of the Russian National School and their associates, funded by the magnate, publisher and music-lover Mitrofan Beliaev in 1885.[6] Besides that, the Court

orchestra also gave concerts, as did the orchestra of the Sheremetev Palace, founded by Count Aleksandr Sheremetev, which gave popular symphonic (and from 1910 free) concerts. However, Ziloti's concerts did have a distinct identity: they were from the start strongly orientated towards new music, including that of the Russian National School as well as European composers, and his roster of performers was dazzlingly international. Although he was on good terms with all major Russian composers, Ziloti did not wish his series to be exclusively identified with Russian contemporary music. He made it his business to know who was up-and-coming in the music world, whether composer or performer; Russian composers who owed him their earliest big breaks included Igor Stravinskii, Mikhail Gnesin and Ziloti's younger cousin, Sergei Rakhmaninov. It was de rigueur for Conservatoire students to attend Ziloti's rehearsals; both luminaries of that institution, Aleksandr Glazunov and Rimskii-Korsakov, supported them and indeed benefited themselves from Ziloti's support.

It was in these concerts that Ziloti made the decision to champion Elgar's music, making him the first Russian musician to take any serious interest in music from Britain, and one of the first European musicians to recognise Elgar's talent. After some years the two men also became friends, since Ziloti visited England regularly both as pianist and conductor. Surviving correspondence between them is, sadly, one-sided only. When Ziloti left Russia (in secret, so as to evade arrest at the Finnish border) in late December 1919 or January 1920 he left his papers behind, and though an extraordinary number of them survive, Elgar's letters to him are not among them. But we have what may well be all of Ziloti's letters and postcards to Elgar – seven in total – preserved in the Elgar Birthplace Museum, while the St Petersburg Institute for the History of Arts has preserved, among some surviving correspondence with foreign musicians, carbon copies of two letters to Elgar's publisher, Novello. And so from this point we can trace the burgeoning relationship between Ziloti and Elgar, and pinpoint

where Ziloti's hopes and plans went awry, and why.[7] Table 1 shows the Elgar performances given in Ziloti's series between 1903-1916, listing companion works.

Table 1

29 Nov 1903, Hall of Nobility. Elgar Cockaigne Overture (with Bruch Violin Concerto, Bach E major Violin Concerto, Chaikovskii Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture, Glazunov Suite from Middle Ages)

30 Oct 1904, Hall of Nobility: Elgar Enigma Variations (with Rimskii-Korsakov Symphony No. 3, Wagner Götterdämmerung finale, Prelude and Liebestod from Tristan, Liadov Scherzo in B major)

3 Dec 1905, Hall of Nobility: Elgar Introduction and Allegro (with Wagner Wotan's Farewell and Magic Fire Music from Götterdämmerung, Rakhmaninov 'Fate' and 'The Gypsies', Napravnik Don Juan, Arenskii Dream on the Volga overture)

18 Nov 1906, Hall of Nobility: Elgar In the South (with Strauss Macbeth, Schumann Cello Concerto (Pablo Casals), Bach Brandenburg Concerto No.1, Moore Cello Concerto (Casals))

24 Jan 1909, Hall of Nobility: Elgar Symphony No. 1 (with Mendelssohn Fingal's Cave, Liszt Piano Concerto No. 2, Stravinskii Scherzo fantastique, Weber Konzertstück for Piano and Orchestra, Liszt Rhapsody No. 1)

12 Dec 1909, Hall of Nobility: Elgar Enigma Variations (with Debussy Dances for Piano and string orchestra, Danse sacrée, Danse Profane, Liadov Enchanted Lake, Chaikovskii Violin Concerto, Ravel Rapsodie Espagnole)

8 Oct 1916, Mariinskii Theatre, Elgar Enigma Variations and Skriabin Symphony No. 3, 'Divine Poem'[8]

At the time of Ziloti's earliest performances, Elgar was a completely unknown quantity in Russia, but he was gaining a reputation in continental Europe as a promising up-and-coming composer (this despite the fact that he was already forty-two when his Enigma Variations (1899) and Dream of Gerontius (1900) achieved recognition in London and Europe).[9] By 1904, Elgar had a Covent Garden Festival dedicated to him with works conducted by Hans Richter (directing the Hallé orchestra) including Gerontius and The Apostles and he was knighted that same year.[10] The ecstatic (though anonymous) reviewer of this festival in The Musical Times gushed: 'Edward Elgar is a poet and a visionary, and to feel his poetry and interpret his visions it behoves the listener to make some effort to climb the spiritual heights whereon great thinkers dwell and weave their wondrous dreams.'[11]

It could be argued, however, that it was Elgar's success with Enigma and Gerontius in Europe and beyond that made the London critics regard him as a real force to be reckoned with, and lists of Elgar's international performances were listed with pride in London music papers. In 1900 Elgar had a piece of incredible luck: the German pianist and conductor Julius Buths was in the Birmingham audience at the premiere of Gerontius in 1900, and was impressed by the work. He made a German translation and gave the oratorio its European premiere in Düsseldorf in December 1901, repeating it the following May. In between, he conducted the Enigma Variations in February 1902. As mentioned above, it was none other than Richard Strauss, with whom Buths co-directed the Lower Rhenish Music Festival, who declared Elgar the 'first progressive English musician' after hearing Gerontius – a back-handed compliment certainly, given England's persistent label in Europe as 'Das Land ohne Musik', but one that travelled well.[12] And here another fortuitous musical meeting took place: for Buths conducted Ziloti in Rakhmaninov's Second Piano Concerto in Düsseldorf in January 1902. It would have been impossible for Ziloti to have heard Buths conduct the Enigma Variations, since Buths' concert took place on 7 January 1902, and Ziloti performed

Taneev's Fourth Symphony in Moscow two days later. He may possibly have heard a rehearsal of the Variations, or heard – even from Buths directly – that it was a piece worth performing. At any rate, Ziloti obtained the score and performed it in his concerts on 30 October 1904, soon afterwards writing triumphantly to the composer a few days later (in English, as translated by his then secretary):

> I have great pleasure in informing you that your variations, which I conducted (the first time in Russia) have had a very great success, both with the public and with the musical world; so great a success that I shall play them again next season. Mr. N. Rimsky-Korsakoff and Mr. A. Glazounoff were particularly pleased with them. I studied them very carefully (because I am quite in love with them) and the rendering was very good. I should be very much obliged if you would let me know whether you have already written, or will write, a great orchestral work.[13]

There is no reason to doubt Ziloti's honesty when he claimed Rimskii-Korsakov and Glazunov were impressed by the Variations. The critic of the foremost music journal, Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta (possibly Ziloti's friend Aleksandr Ossovskii, who reviewed regularly for it, or his colleague on the paper Nikolai Findeizen), however, was more measured in his response:

> a solid, clever work, with a distinctly contemporary air, though not without a touch of scholastic heaviness. The most successful variation was number ten (a very grandiose scherzo) […] on the basis of this performance of the work, the composer is very talented, though it is possible that, owing to the arid musical environment in England, the significance of his talent is over-rated. However, Elgar's reputation is not founded on symphonic works alone but is in fact mainly based on his oratorios The Dream of

> Gerontius and The Apostles which followed [Enigma Variations] and on which his talent can be properly judged, though as yet in Russia we have not heard them.[14]

Already in 1904 this review lays down tropes of 'Englishness' that were far from complimentary: the implication that Elgar's stature is founded on nothing more than being the best England had to offer was bad enough, but 'solid', 'clever', scholastic' and 'heavy' powerfully conveys a further meaning not directly spelled out: that of 'worthy but dull'. Undaunted, Ziloti wrote to Elgar to inform him of his music's great success, and though the fact of the performance was noted (Ziloti had to pay Novello a fee for the performance rights), few translations of Russian reviews made their way to the London papers, and none that did were critical. Because German reviews of this period had been positive, it is likely that those who followed Elgar's European successes assumed that Russian critics were equally delighted with his music.[15] A notice in the London music paper Musical Times reported that the Swiss musicologist Robert Aloys Mooser had reviewed the 1904 Enigma performance in Journal de St Pétersbourg and declared that the Variations 'proves the existence in England of a musician endowed with temperament, possessing great technical skill' which, while not exactly a ringing endorsement, certainly compared favourably with the review in Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta which – perhaps luckily – no one in England seems to have been aware of.[16] However, Mooser's carefully phrased compliment needs contextualizing. He was Ziloti's close friend, and a musician of strong opinion, highly attuned to progressive European trends and intolerant of Russian national provincialism. He probably wished to give Ziloti a reasonably positive notice, but in reality he did not rate Elgar's music highly and thought Ziloti was mistaken in his enthusiasm. In his memoirs he states plainly: 'it was utter folly to perform on four occasions the gloomy works of Edward Elgar…. an English composer who was frighteningly productive and disastrously

impersonal.'[17] Mooser left Russia in 1909 so was not present to witness the full vindication of this view as far as Russian critics and audiences were concerned, but it is interesting to note his opinion of Elgar, since Mooser's European outlook made him in many ways an atypical Russian music critic. With regard to Elgar though, he seemed perfectly attuned to popular Russian musical opinion, as will be seen.

Elgar must have written a friendly reply to Ziloti, since he wrote to him again (still using his secretary to write in English) on 11 January 1905, hoping for news of the First Symphony, on which Elgar was still at work:

> I send you many thanks for your kind letter. I am writing to know if that Symphony you speak of is in print, or if not how soon it will be. The parts I shall not want until the early Autumn, the score, as soon as possible. It would be a good thing to have a greater work follow "the variations" shortly; having given them, I will take anything of yours without seeing it – I ask you to give me the sole permission of giving the Symphony next winter, as my concerts take the ('first place') in the general opinion. In consequence of their having been given here, "the variations" will be given this season in Moscow.
>
> A year this spring I expect to be playing in England, and hope then to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance and talking things over – I should be glad to have an answer as soon as possible.
>
> With very kind regards, sincerely yours, A. Siloti[18]

On 3 June 1906, now writing to Elgar in German (and in his own hand), Ziloti prodded the composer again about his new symphony:

> Esteemed Mr. Elgar!

> I am sending you a programme from which you will see that I, as your admirer, have included your Introduction and Allegro. Everyone here really likes the work, and I am even told that I am an 'Elgar specialist'. I am proud that it was I who introduced you here, and "Gerontius" will be performed here [...]
>
> Is the Symphony ready yet? How are things with the new Symphony? I would certainly schedule it next winter. (Do you have to write something new for orchestra before then?) Are you planning to write something else for orchestra? Everyone is talking about your variations now! Warmest greetings, your admirer A. Ziloti[19]

Though it is not certain whether he waited for Elgar's reply before sending his next postcard, Ziloti wrote again to press him for some details (this card is dated 19 July 1906):

> Esteemed Master! Since I am now putting together my programme, I ask you to communicate to me: 1) what is your new work called (ie about which you wrote to me), 2) how long is it, and 3) with whom is it being edited? I am very happy to get to know a new work from you; the variations are going to be performed in summer in Pavlovsk. Warmest greetings, your admirer, A. Ziloti
> ps right now I'm to be pitied for being a Russian.[20]

In the end, Elgar's long-awaited First Symphony would not be ready for its premiere until 1908, despite being originally planned for the 1904 Covent Garden festival; Ziloti would give the Russian premiere only in January 1909. In between harassing Elgar for his new symphony and its St Petersburg premiere, it is possible that they met on one of Ziloti's English tours. Elgar was part of a 'Birmingham Concerts Society' committee formed to organize orchestral concerts in Birmingham in the 1907-08 season, and Ziloti was engaged to

conduct. He also continued concertizing as a pianist in Britain during these years, appearing almost annually in venues from Edinburgh to London between 1908 and 1912; Vera and Aleksandr Ziloti visited Elgar at his home in March 1912 during another concert tour.[21] Already a well-known pianist in London from his international concertizing days, Ziloti did not allow his English contacts to founder and in fact his connection with Elgar and reputation in London for championing his music brought him further esteem in Britain; he had by 1913-14 already secured dates from the violist Lionel Tertis and the pianist Cyril Scott to perform in his St Petersburg series, and it was only the intervention of war that made their visit impossible.[22]

As the 11 January 1905 letter above shows, Ziloti wished to have Elgar's permission to have sole performance rights in Russia for the First Symphony. On the face of it this was a strange request, and Elgar's publisher and close personal friend August Jaeger (of Novello) thought so too. As he pointed out in a letter to Elgar dated 25 August 1905, 'Siloti wants us to promise him the first performance of your apocryphal Symphony, but I had to explain that we cannot promise anything for a country whose laws do not protect our Performing Rights. Anyone who would be clever enough to obtain Score & parts (say through Leipzig) before Siloti could forestall him without our being able to prevent him.'[23] This is all fair enough, but Jaeger does not ask what for us might be the more obvious question: who else might have even wanted to perform Elgar in St Petersburg or Moscow? Ziloti might well have had an anxious eye on his colleague, the double-bass player and soon-to-be world famous conductor, Sergei Kusevitskii. Though Kusevitskii did not begin his rival series until 1909, in 1905 his career and life had taken a dramatic new turn: he divorced his first wife and married a wealthy heiress, Natal′ia Ushkova and left Russia to study conducting with Artur Nikisch in Leipzig. This was precisely what Ziloti had not done, and he was keenly aware of his lack of training. In 1903 he had been effectively sacked from his first professional conducting

position in Moscow, aged forty. As Charles Barber speculates, 'For reasons of pride or embarrassment, he [Ziloti] took conducting lessons from no-one. Like so many gifted instrumentalists […] he seems to have believed that those gifts were immediately and perfectly transferable to the podium. They were not and are not.'[24] Ziloti had done no more than observe Nikisch in Leipzig; he had never taken any lessons. Perhaps this lay in the back of his mind as he wrote to Elgar; perhaps he was merely thinking of other likely conductors such as Glazunov. In any case, despite Jaeger's doubts that such an agreement could in practice be honoured, Elgar did grant Ziloti sole permission to perform his First Symphony, and Ziloti gave it its Russian premiere on 24 January 1909. Ziloti's personal touch thus bore eventual fruit.

But was this long-awaited child worth the wait so far as Ziloti was concerned? Once again, critical reviews were lukewarm. The Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta critic (again probably Ossovskii or Findeizen) was polite but cautious:

> There is much that is lively, bright and pleasing in this music […] in its overall character, Elgar's music shows the influence of Chaikovskii, Mendelssohn, Brahms, in part Wagner, all composers loved in England. There is undoubtedly the presence of a genuine – and besides that – a warm, healthy, manly talent – but that does not prevent the public here from regarding the symphony with mistrustful restraint. The name of Elgar is as yet too unfamiliar in our concert life.[25]

Comparing Elgar with Chaikovskii was certainly a measure of approval, certainly more so than it would have been if the comparisons had ended at Mendelssohn and Brahms, two composers who never really achieved widespread popularity in twentieth-century Russia, including in the Soviet era. And the terminology has shifted too: 'warm' and 'manly' was certainly a lot better than 'scholastic' and 'heavy'. The anonymous critic of Muzyka i zhizn′,

however, was less positive, and even gave some indication of the audience's reaction to the symphony:

> This symphony by Elgar does not differ from the majority of [those of] contemporary Western composers in those qualities, by virtue of which it managed to be popular with our public, but nevertheless it was not without its striking features. Particularly notable for their originality were the introductory bars, with the strong giant-steps of the basses, though they significantly strained the interest of the listeners, who, by the way, cooled during the first movement and the rather lengthy adagio, but livened up in the second movement, Allegro molto.[26]

What a sad account! The beautiful opening of Elgar's symphony, with its stately Nobilmente walking bass line, boring to Ziloti's audience? Evidently so. But we should also factor in the companion works, since these became even more critical for the premiere of the next major Elgar work, the violin concerto. The First Symphony was accompanied by Mendelssohn's Fingal's Cave – a safe opener. Elgar was next on the programme, then Liszt's Piano Concerto No. 2 played by Vasilii Sapel′nikov, a St Petersburg Conservatoire graduate and astonishing piano virtuoso who was by then resident in Europe after a brief stint as Professor of piano at the Moscow Conservatoire (so Conservatoire students would have been very eager to hear him). After this came Stravinskii's new work Scherzo fantastique, then another Sapel′nikov show-stopper, Weber's Konzertstück for Piano and Orchestra, and finally, Liszt's Rhapsody No. 1 (a solo piano work). This was, in essence, Sapel′nikov's big 'back in St Petersburg' concert, and the majority of his audience would very probably have been there primarily to see him perform. Not only was he famous in Russia for his pianism, he was famous for having been (as was Ziloti) a favoured interpreter of Chaikovskii's piano concerti, having performed with the composer on a number of occasions. Elgar's symphony was perhaps

overwhelmed by this dazzling display of native Russian pianism, and it is not surprising that critics focused on Sapel′nikov's playing at the expense of more detailed accounts of the new work. César Cui, the grouchy foe of musical modernism and one-time member of the famous kuchka, complained to his friend MariiaKerzina equally of the 'terribly long symphony' and Stravinskii's 'terribly long' Scherzo fantastique, as though both were equally representative of the modern mainstream (or 'pseudomusic', as Cui calls it), which they were emphatically not.[27]

Despite Ziloti's vigorous championing, then, Russian critics and audiences seemed undecided on Elgar. Was he just the best that poor old England could produce, or was he the real thing? Ziloti continued to hope that Elgar would produce another masterpiece that he could premiere in Russia. Yet even as he was trying to negotiate this coup – the summer of 1911 – he was already backing away on his earlier promise to Elgar that he would perform anything of his without even seeing it, though this was probably for financial rather than aesthetic reasons. Although it is quite clear that Ziloti sincerely considered Elgar to be an interesting composer, he also saw himself, quite naturally, as someone helping Elgar to build an international reputation. In short, he saw their relationship as mutually advantageous. And this perspective would complicate matters when Ziloti's own finances took a battering, and especially when Kusevitskii began his rival series, which vied with Ziloti's for the best artists and sole permissions to give prestigious premieres. Having asked Novello to send him the score of Elgar's Second Symphony, Ziloti reacted with dismay to the requested fee of fifteen guineas (one guinea was worth approximately one pound) which at that time was roughly equivalent to £1650 today. And he did so in terms that made no bones about the fact that, in his view, Novello should be grateful to him for performing Elgar's music in Russia at all:

> I find your asking for 15 guineas (I do not understand whether this claim is yours or Elgar's) rather too much; the First Symphonie cost 10 guineas, and the Third will cost

20 guineas, and so the claims will go ‘crescendo’! That this was asked of me shocked me somewhat, because I played all of Elgar’s works, when no one wanted to know anything of him, not just in Russia but also in Europe. From a general perspective, one must judge the assessment of the claims from work to work, for when you ask for 10g for the First Symphony, then the Second should really cost me 5g, because it is less of a work by half. All these details have forced me not to perform the Second Symphony, and I return the score. I hope that you will not resent my cancellation and will give me preference for Elgar’s next work because I have been Elgar’s earliest champion here and am convinced that he will yet go on to create great works. Regarding the Violin Concerto. In Spring Ysaye told us that if it has to be paid for, he won’t play it; I asked him yesterday if he would play after all (it would be desirable because the Concerto is supposed to be very beautiful); if yes, then I will tell you and pay 10g for it; Ysaye wants to play at mine on 17 January. With many thanks again for all your kindness, I remain, yours sincerely, A. Siloti.[28]

By the time Elgar’s Violin Concerto was being planned for performance in Russia, Kusevitskii’s concert series was in direct rivalry with Ziloti’s, and Ziloti’s finances were looking shaky, as his letter to Novello above makes clear. Already by 1908 his wife Vera had sold most of her jewellery to fund his concerts, the patronage of his original supporters had come to its end, and Ziloti had to find more rich backers. As Charles Barber has vividly described, Ziloti’s strategy for survival as times grew harder was to throw caution to the winds. His backers needed to see dramatic results if their support was to continue. And so for the 1908-09 series he had commissioned, borrowed and booked his way to a season so outstanding that, at the end of the concert where Elgar’s symphony was played, he was cheered in a prolonged standing ovation and presented with a gold wreath. That season, Artur

Nikisch visited to conduct Beethoven's Eighth and Ninth Symphonies, the great cellist Pablo Casals came to play the Saint-Saens concerto, Fedor Shaliapin sang and Feliks Blumenfel′d conducted. Giving the Elgar premiere, whether or not it went down brilliantly, was a part of what made Ziloti's concerts special, and his audiences evidently realised and valued that. At least until Kusevitskii's series started, Ziloti's concerts were, as he had said to Elgar himself, the place to go for hearing new music; and this remained a matter of great pride for him. His series was, however, just one more prominent Russian music venture requiring significant amounts of private investment to survive, and he was in competition with both Kusevitskii and Diagilev who were each seeking business sponsorship at the same time. When Kusevitskii began his series in 1909, Ziloti would immediately have recognized the danger of being out-bid for the biggest names and performance rights.

Ziloti's problems with Elgar's Violin Concerto began with the dedicatee, Fritz Kreisler, who had commissioned it, and with his rival Kusevitskii, who planned to perform it in his series in January 1913. Had Ziloti already worked with Kreisler, he might have been able to forestall the contract, but he had not. However, he did have good relations with the equally legendary violinist Eugène Ysaÿe. Although it was Kreisler who gave the world premiere in London, with Elgar conducting, in 1910, Ysaÿe had studied the concerto with Elgar very soon afterwards, wishing, too, to perform it worldwide. This could have been Ziloti's salvation. But unfortunately, relations between Ysaÿe and Elgar's publisher Novello quickly soured when terms for performing rights were discussed. In May 1911 Novello offered Ysaÿe a reduced hire rate of five pounds (approximately £520 in today's money) per performance of the Violin Concerto in Europe (four pounds if he promised to play it twenty times in one season across Europe). Ysaÿe refused and what began as a private spat between himself and Novello escalated into a public row, with Ysaÿe going to the press to accuse Novello of charging extortionate fees that damaged Elgar's chances of high quality

performance, insinuating that Novello had trapped the innocent composer in a mercenary web for their own gain.

Stung by this accusation and at risk of reputational damage, Novello pointed out in a public statement that Elgar was fully cognisant of all financial arrangements and the vast bulk of any fee collected went to him directly. They also pointed out that their usual fee for the concerto was seven and a half guineas (about £800); it apparently never exceeded ten. So in reality they had reason to feel they had offered Ysaÿe a good deal. And, as they pointed out, since this was the composer's sole means of earning a living, it was not unreasonable to ask highly-paid concertizing artists to deliver a reasonable fee.[29]

Ziloti was helplessly caught in the middle of this row. It looks as though he knew well that Kreisler was scheduled to perform the Elgar with Kusevitskii on 23 January 1913 and that he was desperate to steal their thunder. His proposed date – which he put directly to Novello – was 17 January – just a week before Kreisler's concert, which would have been a major coup for Ziloti and a blow for Kusevitskii. He tried to bypass the Ysaÿe-Novello row by offering to pay the maximum fee of ten guineas himself, but by then Ysaÿe was so offended and angry with Novello that he simply refused to play it, whether or not it cost him personally any money. This was an extraordinary offer from Ziloti given first, his straitened financial circumstances and second, his disappointment with the Second Symphony, fuelling the suspicion that upstaging Kusevitskii was all-important to him.

In the end, it turned out better for Ziloti that he did not manage to do so. Because Russian reactions to Elgar's concerto, which Kreisler premiered under Kusevitskii on 23 January 1913, were, so far as I have been able to find, unanimously negative, far more so than reactions to Enigma or to the symphony. And again, at least part of the problem was surely programming. Kusevitskii opened with Smetana, overture to The Bartered Bride, then went on to the Elgar, then Musorgskii, Introduction to Khovanshchina, 'Dawn over the

Moscow River', Liadov Baba-Iaga, and ended with excerpts from Stravinskii's Petrushka. The programme note gave only the blandest biographical information about Elgar – son of an organist, began composing late, influenced by Grieg and Wagner, recently very popular in England – and stopped short of preparing the audience for the work itself, stating merely that it was composed for Fritz Kreisler. This time the critics were a lot more outspoken: the concert as a whole was judged superb, and Kreisler masterful, but none could hide their disappointment at the work he chose to perform. The critic of Russkie vedomosti found that the concerto 'seemed devoid of any creative flight [polet], but Fritz Kreisler managed to give artistic significance and interest to even the most insignificant of musical phrases.'[30] The critic of Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta was once again unimpressed, and this time was blunter in his assessment:

> Every appearance by this artist-philosopher of the violin is a festival of art, but this time there was no festival. And this was the fault of the English composer Elgar... All of Kreisler's formidable powers were needed for such a work, lacking any creative élan [pod″em] and engaged in only serious thoughts, in order to leave us in anything other than a dreary mood. Kreisler was only able to offer compensation to his audience in the encores.[31]

But most critical by far was the journal Muzyka, a short-lived Moscow weekly, which ran from 1910-1916. Its critic for this concert was 'Misantrop' – the pseudonym used by the composer Nikolai Miaskovskii:

> To be truthful, there is not much to say about this work: it is textually solid, its themes are lacklustre and completely without interest from the virtuosic perspective; there was one not bad, even fresh, episode in the finale, but aside from that one place, it is simply

> not worth playing or listening to this choleric and ponderous [kholerichno-tiaguchii] work.[32]

It is not surprising, after this critical onslaught, that Ziloti dropped all thoughts of performing the concerto, either with Ysaÿe or any other violinist. And he may well have been grateful to fate for preventing him from being the one to have delivered such a flop. His concerts continued through the war years in a different form until February 1917, when the conditions of revolution – strikes, marches, looting, requisitioning of buildings – made them impossible. Ziloti carried on his administrative work under extremely difficult circumstances until the end of 1919; he initially accepted the position of Director at the Mariinskii Theatre (May 1917), was arrested by the CHEKA on a charge of provocation in December (for refusing to hand over the keys of the Imperial Box, presumably to the new Commissar for Enlightenment, Anatolii Lunacharskii[33]) and when he had been released, was put under house arrest; his son Levko was arrested and a friend arrested with him was shot (Levko Ziloti fled to Finland on his release). Finally, Ziloti was dismissed from the Mariinskii in late 1918. In either late 1919 or early 1920, with the assistance of the English musician-turned-spy, Paul Dukes, Ziloti and his wife escaped over the border to Finland and from thence made their way to England, the first of their émigré refuges, though ultimately the family would re-settle in New York.[34]

Elgar's Soviet Years

It is not possible to assert with 100% confidence that no Elgar was played in either Petrograd-Leningrad or Moscow between 1916 (the year of Ziloti's last Elgar performance) and January 1934, when the British conductor Edward Clark visited Moscow and played Elgar's 'Cockaigne' overture. The Leningrad Philharmonia archive only starts in 1921, and does not cover the interim years when Kusevitskii took over its original role as the Imperial Orchestra.

By the time Kusevitskii had left Russia in 1920, Emil′ Kuper was the orchestra's chief conductor, and the records begin under his tenure. In Moscow, the orchestra which, after several incarnations, became the Moscow Philharmonia, has very incomplete records until the mid-1930s and these are the orchestras with the biggest archival holdings: many other ensembles and orchestras have little or no surviving documentation.[35]

Neither orchestra holds evidence of Clark's trip in early 1934, because he performed with the Moscow Radio Orchestra, not the Philharmonia and the concert was broadcast only. This British musical visit was a very unusual event in Russia, for several inter-connected reasons. First of all, musical Russia was intimately connected with Europe. It had very tenuous connections with America and Britain other than both being on the touring destinations of its greatest nineteenth-century Russian performers. Therefore, even during the most culturally permissive years of the New Economic Policy and the brief 'Enlightenment' of the first half of the 1930s, visiting musicians and composers were – if you count those who had emigrated to America after 1933 – nearly all from central Europe (Fritz Stiedry, chief conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonia until 1937, among them).[36] Big names from America were not unknown: Henry Cowell visited in 1929, for example, as did the tenor Roland Hayes (1928), the violinist Ruth Posselt (1934) and the contralto Marian Anderson (1935), who were all making international tours at that time.[37] The strong Russian-Europe connection was wholly congruent not only with the personal contacts that musicians traditionally relied on for touring invitations (these being firmly rooted in Europe, many of them pre-1917) but also with the assumption that Europe provided the most fertile musical soil when it came to new music. Henry Cowell, who continued to correspond with Soviet musicians and even write for their press, was not representative of any American compositional 'school' with his shock-techniques of percussive piano writing (using whole arm clusters, for example) and so seemed more of a one-off maverick than part of an

American new music aesthetic. While Béla Bartók, Alban Berg and Darius Milhaud all visited Russia to hear and perform their music, hardly any British music was performed in the most prestigious orchestral concerts in Moscow or Leningrad, nor did any British musician (not counting Albert Coates, who will be discussed below) perform on the Moscow or Leningrad Philharmonia stages. However, Soviet Russia was not unaware of recent trends in British music. Indeed, the Composers' Union journal (founded in 1933), Sovetskaia muzyka, featured an article by Michel D. Calvocoressi in January 1935 on 'English Music', in which Ralph Vaughan Williams and all the young(ish) Turks on the music scene – Arthur Bliss, Arnold Bax, Herbert Howells and Gustav Holst – are accounted for. Elgar's reputation is done no favours at all by Calvocoressi's uncritical, even approving, reference to the Cambridge musicologist Edward J. Dent's opinion that 'to English ears Elgar's music is too emotional and not entirely free from vulgarity'.[38] Aside from that, no mention is made of Elgar at all. By this time Elgar, having died just the previous year, is apparently considered of no real interest in an article about contemporary British music so far as Russia was concerned.

British composers did visit Russia – Rutland Boughton was there in 1927, having joined the Communist Party of Great Britain the previous year and the communist composer Alan Bush in 1938 and 1939 (by which time normal international musical exchange had been suspended – Bush was a fellow communist guest of the Composers' Union). But aside from the politically-motivated visits of Boughton and Bush, those of Clark (and, the following year, his friend the pianist Harriet Cohen) are of more interest to us here, because they were interlinked with another musician of the Ziloti era, one who worked with him closely and counted him as a friend: the Anglo-Russian conductor Albert Coates.

Coates was born to English parents (in England) but was educated in Russia because his father was employed there by the Russian government before the revolution. He trained

under Nikisch in Leipzig and was appointed conductor of the Imperial Opera in St Petersburg in 1910. During the decade before 1917 Coates travelled regularly to and from Russia and London, and was a passionate advocate of Russian music in Britain and British music in Russia. He conducted not only orchestral concerts at the Queen's Hall in London, but was also engaged by Covent Garden Opera, principally as a Wagner conductor (this was also his speciality in St Petersburg). Like Ziloti, Coates found conditions during the civil war unbearable. He fled Russia in 1919 and returned to England, also temporarily, since after the Second World War he made his permanent home in South Africa. But because Coates remained active in London's musical life until that time, he was known to a great many figures in the capital's cultural life, including those in the BBC. Edward Clark, until his resignation from the BBC in 1936, was head of music there and had a keen interest in Russian music, as well as in Soviet politics. He was a member of the then-Bloomsbury-based Society for Cultural Relations between the Peoples of the British Commonwealth and the USSR (SCR, founded 1924) and the files of the Soviet cultural relations organisation VOKS (Vsesoiuznoe obshchestvo kul′turnoi sviazi s zagranitsei) in Moscow contain some correspondence both to and from him.[39] Although letters directly relating to his visit have not been preserved so far as I have been able to discover, it is likely that VOKS and the SCR arranged it. But it is also very likely that it was facilitated by Coates, who restored professional contacts in Russia from at least as early as 1927, when he conducted Holst's 'Mars' (from The Planets) in Leningrad that May. The London Daily Telegraph reported in 1932 that Coates had been offered the position of 'Director of Leningrad and Moscow Philharmonic Societies' – a very unlikely job title, since the two organisations were completely independent of each other – but it is certain that Coates was working in Russia that year, and had been working closely with the Bol′shoi since 1930. Later in 1932, the Telegraph reported that Coates had cancelled his contract and was returning to England; but

Coates still returned to conduct in Moscow and Leningrad over the next few years.[40] Therefore, if Coates had known of Clark's eagerness to visit Russia – which, given their mutual strong interest in new Russian music and Clark's powerful and influential position at the BBC seems highly likely – he was perfectly placed to facilitate it. That the two men were friends is amply illustrated by the fact that Coates made special arrangements for Clark to collect his fur coat from Berlin en route to Moscow. Coates wrote solicitously to Clark on 13 December 1933:

> My dear Edward
>
> I am writing a letter to Paula Frank, a dear old friend of mine in Berlin…who has the ticket for my shuba which is in storage there. I do hope, my dear Edward, that you will not go to Moscow without it. It would be dreadfully dangerous for you; January is the coldest month in the year and, by George, it can be cold. Don't forget to take my cap too; don't underrate the cold. When you come back from Russia, will you please bring the shuba right back to England with you, as I will want it in March for my visit to Leningrad.
>
> I was very impressed with your choice of programme, but would like to have a look at them on black and white again; would you let me have them? The Russians are not very fond of shortish pieces, they like a mouthful and it just struck me that perhaps you had too many items on each programme.
>
> I enclose a letter for you to take to Paula Frank.
>
> Always everything of the best to you
>
> Ever yours, Albert.[41]

This letter shows not only that Coates and Clark were on very friendly terms, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, that Coates was overseeing aspects of Clark's trip, including advising on his proposed programme. In the end, Clark conducted the following works: Elgar's 'Cockaigne' overture, Frederick Delius's Brigg Fair, John Ireland's Piano Concerto (performed by Marina Iudina), Constant Lambert's Music for Orchestra and William Walton's Façade suite. The concert was reviewed, in both Sovetskaia muzyka and (at rather more length) in the radio journal Govorit SSSR, since it was a studio concert with the Moscow Radio Orchestra. The Sovetskaia muzyka critic was A. Konstant Smis (the pseudonym of the musicologist Konstantin Kuznetsov) but he does not even mention the Elgar work in his review (the overture 'Cockaigne'), instead concentrating entirely on the Constant Lambert and John Ireland works.[42] Evidently Kuznetsov regarded Elgar's overture as nothing more significant than an agreeable opening work, unworthy of critical reflection, probably owing to its age (composed 1901). Evgenii Braudo, the Govorit SSSR critic, at least gave Elgar a reasonable number of column inches; yet throughout his review he misspelled Elgar's name as 'Elgard' – a striking indication of how completely his name had vanished from Russian musical discourse. Clark performed only the overture, and Braudo does not have much to say about it: 'For its time this overture sounded bold, even expressed an unexpected melodic turn, with its own richness and beauty. Today it has lost this novelty.'[43] Perhaps Braudo's introduction to the concert was more revealing of lingering Russian attitudes to English music in general:

> The historic development of English music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries happened under the strong influence of German musical art, especially of the Romantic school. It is generally known that the biggest influence for English musical culture was Handel; that powerful master brought to English music a strong current of German bourgeois culture, synthesising opera and oratorio with Italian musical techniques. In

> the nineteenth century almost just as great an influence on English music was Felix Mendelssohn, a composer who balanced the elements of classical and romantics schools. Nowhere in the world was Mendelssohn so often performed as in England, and this is so right up to the present time.
>
> The new English school, emerging at the start of the twentieth century, tried to break from the classical-romantic traditions and replace them with a strongly realist current. The first major master working in this direction was Edward Elgard [sic], now a venerable old man (75).[44]

Indeed, the only piece Braudo summoned up any enthusiasm for at all was Walton's Façade suite – and even that he judged to be 'of the music-hall type'. His account of English music was not inaccurate, although very partial; but it gives a distinct impression of provincialism, dependence upon Germany (and not one of Russia's favourite Germans either – Mendelssohn was hardly ever played in orchestral concerts) and a general lack of originality and brilliance. When Harriet Cohen – Clark's friend and fellow Russian music enthusiast - made the same journey a year later to play on 31 May and 1 June 1935 (also for a radio broadcast rather than a live concert) she played Bach, Purcell, Leonid Polovinkin (a contemporary Soviet composer), Debussy, Arnold Bax and Joaquin Turina – a strikingly eclectic mix, but hardly aiming to represent British music in Russia, apart from that by Bax, her long-term lover, whose music she loyally performed all over the world.

But what of Coates – the only tangible link to pre-revolutionary Petersburg life as regards connections with Britain? Aside from his 1927 performance of 'Mars', he returned to Leningrad regularly in the early 1930s (see n. 39 below for dates) and the Leningrad Philaharmonia records show that he performed Elgar's Enigma Variations and his own

Pickwick Suite in the 1934-35 season.[45] From 1936, foreign conductors were no longer invited and some of those already with contracts, such as Otto Klemperer and Fritz Stiedry, found they were cancelled in 1937.[46] Thus Coates's Russian career also came to an end; and no more Elgar was heard in Leningrad or Moscow, at least for the time being. But once Hitler's forces invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, and Russia joined the Allies, everything changed yet again. In all three Moscow Philharmonia concerts organised by VOKS between 1943 and 1945, Elgar's music was played: his Enigma Variations in May 1943, his 'Cockaigne' overture in 1944 and 'Pomp and Circumstance March No. 3' in 1945. Reviews were blandly polite, describing all the works positively, but it was the VOKS music official, Grigorii Shneerson, who gave the fullest description of Elgar's music. Writing for Vecherniaia Moskva, he singled out the fourth variation ('a brilliant musical characterisation of a close friend of the composer') and praises the work's 'humour and grace'.[47] Another rare event took place on 17 November 1945, this time in Leningrad (the Philharmonia having returned from their wartime exile): a concert which included Gavriil Popov's Second Symphony ('Rodina') alongside Elgar's Introduction and Allegro, excerpts from Arthur Bliss's ballet suite Chess, Samuel Barber's Etude and Eli Siegmeister's Ozark Set – clearly intended as an Allied concert celebrating music by Soviet, British and American composers, and featuring composers whose names would soon be completely blackened in early cold-war Soviet pronouncements on decadent Western culture.[48] After 1948, none of the music showcased in Allied concerts was heard again until after Stalin's demise.

On 21 February 1945 in Moscow, the musicologist and minor composer Igor′ Belza gave an address – possibly to schoolchildren rather than to musicians or the general public given that it was published by the Komitet po delam vysshei shkoly pri SSK (Soiuz Sovetskikh kompozitorov) - on 'Sovremennaia angliiskaia muzyka', a stenogram of which was published that year.[49] Belza's talk was a very basic factual account – at this stage (before

the cold war set in) polite and positive about every aspect of 'English' music (as it was always called in the Soviet press) that he mentioned. Elgar does appear, of course, and is given an approving mention for his 'deeply national' music, with no critical mention of Empire, as might have been expected if this talk had taken place in the late 1920s. Belza instead draws an uncontroversial (in Soviet terms) link between the Elgarian national sound and English folk music. The list of works he reels off is curious, and bears little relation to those Russian audiences may have heard: King Olaf, the Violin and Cello Concerti, the little-known Banner of St George, The Kingdom, Coronation Ode and, finally, the Enigma Variations. The fact that Belza was known for his interest in English music only underlines the extent to which this odd choice of works reveals how Soviet musicology had lost touch with it, despite the flurry of gramophone records and scores sent over by the British Council during the war.[50] Then, in Moscow, for the 1946-47 season, David Oistrakh gave a series of concerts for his 'Development of the Violin Concerto' series that, on 9 December 1946, included Elgar's Violin Concerto – so far as I am aware, the first time it had been performed in Russia since Kreisler so disappointed his audiences with the work in January 1913.[51]

And that, at least for the rest of the Stalin era, was that as far as Russia and Elgar were concerned. The next performance I have been able to verify was that given by Malcolm Sargent in May 1957, when he visited Moscow and Leningrad; he included Elgar's Introduction and Allegro in his second concert in Leningrad, along with Prokof′ev's Sinfonia Concertante (performed by Mstislav Rostropovich). It was the work's third hearing in that city since Ziloti had performed it in December 1905 (the second being the Allied concert in 1945). By that time, all memory of Ziloti's championing of Elgar had surely been forgotten by all but a few, by now very old, musicians such as the eighty-two year old pianist Aleksandr Gol′denveizer, Ziloti's old pupil at the Moscow Conservatoire. It is just possible that the possible original critic of Ziloti's first performance of Elgar's symphony, Aleksandr

Ossovskii, attended or noticed the concert: he died in Leningrad two months later. In May, the month of Sargent's concert, Mikhail Gnesin, one of the composers whom Ziloti had supported as a young man, also died; Sergei Prokof′ev (another whose music Ziloti supported) had died in 1953 and Miaskovskii, who had so disliked Elgar's Violin Concerto in 1913 but who also gained support from Ziloti, had died in 1950. Shostakovich was too young to have remembered those Elgar performances; and so gradually, the generation of musicians who might have remembered slowly passed away.

Wrong music, wrong place, wrong time?

Perhaps the most striking thing about Russian Elgar reception is how vulnerable it was to political changes. After October 1917, as Russia was plunged into civil war, life for many professional musicians became so difficult that they chose to emigrate; if not immediately (as Rakhmaninov did) then gradually, over the next few years. This meant that a huge amount of experience and talent was lost, and though efforts were made to persuade that lost generation (including Ziloti) to return, they were unsuccessful in all but one famous case – that of Prokof′ev. Coates, however, was in a unique position as someone who held prestige both in London and in Russia before 1917. An Englishman by birth, his departure in 1920 did not cause him to become persona non grata in Russia in the way that it did for some Russian émigrés. By returning to conduct in 1927 and thereafter, Coates preserved the fragile threads of what Ziloti had achieved, even if the results were just a very few Elgar performances attracting little or no press attention. But once foreign musicians were no longer welcome after 1936-37, of course, even this tenuous link to the past was broken. As for the Allied concerts in the mid-1940s, these were part of a much broader picture of cultural exchange that I have partly reconstructed elsewhere and it would be astonishing if Elgar had not been featured in them; but it is clear from correspondence between Soviet composers and the

British Embassy during the war that Soviet musicians were more interested in discovering new British music than catching up with older works that they felt little affinity with.[52] Their awareness that Russia's musical borders had closed in 1937 and may well do so again meant that staying abreast of developments in Western Europe and America was a far greater priority for them than catching up with the unfashionable music of an older generation. And when, after Stalin's death, those borders were relaxed, it was Britten who achieved recognition in Russia, not composers of the previous generation.

Perhaps the old German label of England as 'das Land ohne Musik' stuck too firmly in Russian musical memories for individual musicians to quite believe it was not true. Yet it must also be acknowledged that Elgar's chronology was not on his side in Russia, which after 1917 was a melting-pot for the most advanced avant-garde cultural movements in Europe. By the time Russian concert life was settling down in the 1920s, musicians were exploring contemporary European works, embracing modernist techniques and rejecting the comparatively staid language of the preceding generation (Russian as well as Western).[53] And even after the introduction of literary socialist realism in 1934 and its trickle-down effect into orchestral music, the conservative traditions of an earlier age and different culture were hardly enticing models for composers of the stature of Shostakovich and Prokof′ev, who would each come to their own productive rapprochement with the doctrine. For most Russians both before and after 1917, Elgar was, in short, regarded as an English domestic product, a provincial on the European stage, to be politely heard out when political demands required it, and no more. His music never seemed to meet the aesthetic demands of Russia's concert-going public at any point: in the 1900s he compared unfavourably with Skriabin and Stravinskii (just about meriting a comparison with Chaikovskii), while by the 1930s his music was simply regarded as irrelevant – a local curiosity from an earlier age. Had the Enigma Variations, Violin Concerto or First Symphony achieved instant popularity in Ziloti's

concerts, they would probably have remained in Russian orchestral repertoire, just as Strauss's early tone-poems did (and indeed early Stravinskii ballets – there was never a time when Petrushka or Firebird was struck from Soviet repertoire lists). But the underwhelmed response to Ziloti's campaigning meant that this never happened, and so the moment where Elgar's music could have entered Russian orchestral repertoire passed by.

What we should make of this now is debatable. One might suspect that there was an innate snobbery in the mindset of those early twentieth-century Russian critics – a predisposition to sneer at the provincial offerings from 'das Land ohne Musik'. Ironically – given that Miaskovskii's own style was old-fashioned almost from the start – it was Miaskovskii who could most fairly be accused of that; though his disdain was fairly generously spread across nearly all new music from Europe, including that of Stravinskii.[54] There was a deep-seated defensiveness towards the hegemony of the Austro-German tradition in some sections of the early twentieth-century Russian music scene that was rooted in the Russian National School's much-vaunted distaste for the 'German' Petersburg and Moscow Conservatoires opened by Anton and Nikolai Rubinshtein, in which there was also a large dose of anti-Semitism.[55] But it can be found, too, in Chaikovskii's prickly attitude to European musicians whom he suspected of patronizing him: writing to his brother Modest in 1877 from Vienna, he complained 'if you could only hear the offensively patronising tone in which they speak of Russian music!' Of his meeting with Liszt, he goes on to say 'he was sickeningly polite, but all the while there was a smile on his lips which expressed the above words pretty plainly.'[56] And Marina Frolova-Walker has charted the entire project of Russian musical nationalism from its beginnings to its Soviet incarnation, showing how the desire to promote the notion of an innate, uniquely Russian musical language – unbeholden to any European composer – was a potent force in late-nineteenth and twentieth-century Russian musical historiography and criticism.[57] During the Soviet era itself, of course, pride in

nationalism underwent a transformation, from being anathema to the Leninist internationalism of the 1920s, to being mandatory in the late 1930s and 40s – a switch that had a deep, and lasting, effect on Soviet conservatoire history teaching.[58] In both the post-1936 climate and that of the Stalinist cold war (from 1948-53), showcasing contemporary music from 'hostile' Western nations was clearly undesirable and potentially dangerous: music institutions therefore simply stopped even trying. It is hardly surprising, then, that Elgar disappears from view as he did – he was merely another European composer barred from Soviet programmes during these difficult years.

It is too easy to point to this history and infer defensive insularity as the sole preserve of Russians. For in the music world, Russia was hardly alone in mounting a defensive stance against the Austro-German canon – the English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams was no less so when he published his essays in the collection National Music, based on lectures he gave in Pennsylvania Bryn Mawr College in 1932, where he argued that a truly English music should be built from its folk-roots up (he had been collecting folk songs himself since the early 1900s).[59] It would be folly to conclude that Russians like Ossovskii, Miaskovskii and others were closing ranks, too anxious about their own international status to admit another outsider. Russian musical life in the pre-revolutionary era was not monolithic: ancient prejudices still remained in the critical mix (the aged kuchkist César Cui being pre-eminent among them) but Ziloti perfectly bridged the gap between Chaikovskii and his contemporaries Rimskii-Korsakov and Glazunov and young, ambitious internationalists like Prokof′ev and Stravinskii. As a touring artist, he made contacts in cities across Europe, and where he encountered great musicianship and talent, he embraced it whether it came from Vienna, Paris or London. It is true that his international tours gave him privileged insights into less familiar musical cultures like that of Britain; and it is also true that Ziloti was something of a special case, both in terms of his openness to those cultures, and his unusually

fine judgement when it came to choosing composers and musicians for his series. But it is nevertheless a reality that England was not able to boast of much world-class new music in those years; nor was it unreasonable for the Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta critic to observe that a couple of orchestral works was an inadequate basis from which to judge whether or not Elgar was something really out of the ordinary. And if we regard Kreisler's unfortunate choice of concerto for his Russian programme, we must bear in mind what other concerti he might have offered that his Russian audience may reasonably have expected: virtuosic showcases like the Wieniawski No. 2 (a Russian favourite, having been premiered by the composer in St Petersburg in 1862) or the Beethoven, Mendelssohn or Chaikovskii concerti. Instead of playing a work that could be guaranteed to bring the house down, he chose to play a concerto no one knew, that was difficult without being showy (and so not obviously virtuosic), and which was anything but a light-hearted, sparkling show-stopper. It is unquestionably one of Elgar's greatest works, and one of the great string concerti of the last century, but it is also emotionally dense, passionate and lyrical rather than cheerful and almost a full hour long – much longer than the Wieniawski (around twenty minutes) and Mendelssohn (around thirty minutes); even the Chaikovskii is just over half an hour long. What registers most strongly in those Russian reviews of Kreisler's concert is disappointment, not xenophobic prejudice. Miaskovskii's voice was indisputably negative; but then he was negative about an awful lot of music, including that by the full roster of twentieth-century greats, starting with Mahler ('such unbelievably poor and vulgar music') and taking in Ravel ('banal'), Stravinskii ('has he lapsed into his second childhood?!'), Schoenberg ('and his litter') and Strauss ('boring and vapid').[60] Why should he have liked Elgar any better?

It seems fair to conclude that Elgar in Russia was a proposition doomed to failure by the forces of history. What Ziloti created was an environment for gradual familiarity and

acceptance that was prevented from blossoming by war and revolution; and even Coates could not repair the damage by the time he began to conduct again in Leningrad and Moscow. Polite praise for Elgar during Allied concerts was naturally offset by keener interest in newer music, which by then Soviet audiences had been deprived of for almost a decade. Elgar's moment passed: an accident of history, a victim, perhaps, of taste and fashion; but not of prejudice.

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[1] Principal sources are Philip Ross Bullock, Rosa Newmarch and Russian Music in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century England, Farnham: 2009, Gareth Thomas, 'The Impact of Russian Music in England, 1893-1929', PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2005 and Stephen Muir, '"About as Wild and Barbaric as could well be imagined…" The Critical Reception of Rimsky-Korsakov in Nineteenth-Century England', Music and Letters vol. 93 no. 4, 2012, pp. 513-542. See also Rebecca Beasley and Philip Ross Bullock, eds., Russia in Britain 1880-1940. From Melodrama to Modernism, Oxford: 2013.

[2] See especially Bullock, Rosa Newmarch, chapter 2, pp. 18-37.

[3] Charles F. Barber, Lost in the Stars: The Forgotten Musical Life of Alexander Siloti, Lanham, MD: 2002, 50.

[4] Ibid., 79.

[5] See Richard Taruskin, Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions, Berkeley: 1996, p. 372. The group was, as Taruskin notes, affiliated to Sergei Diagilev and the Mir Iskusstva circle. See also http://silverage.ru/vechsovmuz/ [accessed 30 January 2017].

[6] Taruskin observes that, by 1906, Beliaev's Russian Symphony concerts were not held in high regard by critics or audiences, and that for an up-and-coming composer like Igor Stravinskii (who obtained some early performances there thanks to the support of his teacher Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov) there was even some stigma in being associated with the institution. See Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions, p. 252.

[7] I thank John Norris for his exceedingly generous assistance in gaining copies of all these letters from the Elgar Birthplace Museum, for checking catalogue numbers and dates for me, and for his help in gaining permission to quote from them. All of the letters referred to in this article, with the exception of those from Ziloti to Novello, are quoted with the kind permission of the Elgar Will Trust.

[8] All concert data is drawn from Barber, Lost in the Stars, pp. 262-337.

[9] Anon., 'Edward Elgar', The Musical Times and Singing-Class Circular, 1 October 1900, p. 646.

[10] Anon., 'Occasional Notes', The Musical Times and Singing-Class Circular, 1 December 1903, p. 790.

[11] Anon., 'The Elgar Festival', The Musical Times and Singing-Class Circular, 1 April 1904, p. 242.

[12] The book that popularised this phrase, by Oscar A. H. Schmitz (Das Land ohne Musik: Englische Gesellschaftesprobleme) was published only in 1904, but it drew on ideas that were already established.

[13] Elgar Birthplace Museum (henceforth EB) 9382, dated 2/15 November 1904 (including both old and new calendar dates, as on the original letter). Underlining as in the original, which is in English.

[14] Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta No. 45, 7 November 1904, p. 1050.

[15] See for example Anon., 'Occasional Notes', The Musical Times Vol. 46, No. 743 (Jan. 1, 1905), pp. 23-26, Anon, 'An Elgar Concert in Ostend', The Musical Times Vol. 49, No. 787 (Sep. 1, 1908), pp. 581-583, and 'Foreign Notes', The Musical Times Vol. 49, No. 789 (Nov. 1, 1908), pp. 732-734.

[16] See Anon., 'Occasional Notes', p. 26.

[17] Mary S. Woodside, ed., The Russian Life of R.-Aloys Mooser, Music Critic to the Tsars, Lewiston: 2008, p. 156.

[18] EB 5960. Underlining and parenthesis as in the original.

[19] EB 5961. Underlining as in the original. I thank Annika Forkert for kindly transcribing Ziloti's German handwriting in all the German-language sources included in this article, and for checking my German translations. Unfortunately, Gerontius was not performed in Russia, neither pre-1917, nor for the whole of the Soviet period, so far as I have been able to discover, until Evgenii Svetlanov conducted it in Moscow on 21 April 1983. I thank Levon Hakobian for this information.

[20] EB 5964. Underlining as in the original. Ziloti's comment about being 'pitied for being a Russian' may well have been in reference to the Tsar's dissolution of the Duma on 8 July 1906, alarmed by its growing liberalism. Nicholas II installed the monarchist and well-known right-winger Petr Stolypin as Prime Minister. Ziloti is known to have held liberal political views and supported workers' rights.

[21] See entries in Alice Elgar's diaries, 4 and 6 March 1912. EB.

[22] Ziloti's letters from Tertis and Scott have survived. See Russkii Institut Istorii Iskusstv, fond. 17, op. 1, ed. khr. 122 and 132.

[23] EB 8754. Underlining and capitalization as in the original.

[24] Barber, Lost in the Stars, p. 83.

[25] Anon., Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta 1 February 1909, p. 147.

[26] A. P-o, Muzyka i zhizn′, 6 February 1909 p. 12. I have not been able to identify this critic. The journal's editors were D. E. Arkad′ev and A. L. Maslov.

[27] Taruskin, Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions, p. 410. The 'kuchka' was the colloquial nickname for the Russian National School comprising Milii Balakirev (its founder), Nikolai Rimskii-Korsakov, Modest Musorgskii, Aleksandr Borodin and César Cui. By 1901 the group was defunct even though several of its members were still living. See Alexander Tumanov, transl. Christopher Barnes, The Life and Artistry of Maria Olenina-d'Alheim, p. 88, where Balakirev explains that he has broken off relations with Rimskii-Korsakov and Cui.

[28] Russkii Institut Istorii Iskusstv fond 17, opis 1, edinitsa khranenia 6, ll. 35-37. Abbreviations and underlining as in the original, which is in German. I thank Annika Forkert for generously transcribing and translating this letter. Ziloti had a similar problem with Richard Strauss's Salome: Mooser had recommended he perform the 'Dance of the Seven Veils' but was told this would cost five hundred marks (a sum he could not afford). When both Strauss and the publisher made it clear the fee was non-negotiable, Ziloti withdrew all plans to perform the work. See Woodside, ed., The Russian Life of R.-Aloys Mooser, p. 156, n. 6.

[29] The whole argument can be seen in Anon., 'M. Ysaye and the Elgar Violin Concerto', The Musical Times, vol. 54 no. 839, 1 January 1913, pp. 19-20. I thank John Pickard for drawing my attention to this source. See also Jerrold Northrop Moore, Elgar and his Publishers: Letters of a Creative Life, Oxford: 1987, pp. 747-760.

[30]Anon., Russkie vedomosti 1 February 1913, p. 4. This critic may have been Nikolai Kashkin, who reviewed for several papers and music journals at this time.

[31] Russkaia muzykal′naia gazeta 9 February 1913, p. 164.

[32] 'Misantrop', Muzyka, 23 February 1913, p. 140.

[33] This episode – regarding who actually requested the keys - is unclear in Barber, Lost in the Stars, p. 173.

[34] See Paul Dukes, Red Dusk and the Morrow. Adventures and Investigations in Soviet Russia, London: 1922. Dukes does not mention Ziloti in the book, but he gives accounts of other people he helped escape to Finland, as well as vivid descriptions of his own passages to and from the Soviet border over the same routes.

[35] See records of both Leningrad and Moscow Philharmonias in Fairclough, Classics for the Masses. Shaping Soviet Musical Identity Under Lenin and Stalin, New Haven and London, 2016.

[36] A few British musicians did visit, as will be discussed, but they did not perform in the prestigious Philharmonia series. The English pianist John Hunt performed Ernst Křenek's Second Piano Sonata (with Beethoven op. 10 No. 3) in Moscow in early 1935, for example. See A. Konstant Smis, 'Dzhon Khant i Beveredii Vebster', Sovetskaia muzyka 1935/4, p. 94.

[37] For a detailed discussion of this, see Fairclough Classics for the Masses. I use the term 'Enlightenment' after Katerina Clark's Moscow: The Fourth Rome, Cambridge, Mass., 2011. For Henry Cowell's visit, see Elena Dubinets, 'Pervootkryvatel′ novoi muzyky', Muzykal′naia akademia no. 3, 2003, pp. 196-205. Ruth Posselt's 8 December Moscow Conservatoire concert in 1935 is reviewed in Sovetskaia muzyka 1934/1, p. 75. In April 1933 Jascha Heifetz also toured in Russia for the first time since he had left for America in 1917 – his first and only return visit.

[38] M. D. Calvocoressi, 'Angliiskaia muzyka', Sovetskaia muzyka 1935/1, pp. 85-88; Dent's comment is repeated on p. 86. For a discussion of this remark, see Matthew Riley, Edward Elgar and the Nostalgic Imagination, Cambridge: 2009, p. 55 and Andrew Blake, The Land Without Music. Music, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain, Manchester: 1997, p. 22.

[39] GARF fond 5283 Op. 15 d. 75 l. 2, Op. 3 d. 462 l. 2, Op. 15 d. 12 l. 31.

[40] Anon., 'Albert Coates for Russia', Daily Telegraph, 30 June 1932, p. 10; 'Albert Coates and the Soviet', Daily Telegraph, 2 December 1932 p. 12; 'Mr Albert Coates. Concert in Soviet Workshop', Daily Telegraph, 18 April 1934 p. 15. He also conducted there in May and December 1934; see Iu. Vainkop, 'Kontsertnaia zhizn′ Leningrada', Sovetskaia muzyka 1934/6, p. 70 and A. Ostretsov, 'Simfonicheskie kontserty', Sovetskaia muzyka 1935/2, pp. 85-86.

[41] British Library, Add. MS. 52256, p. 86.

[42] A. Konstant Smis, 'Muzykal′no-kriticheskie fragmenty', Sovetskaia muzyka 1934/3, p. 72. Konstantin Kuznetsov was a well-respected critic, musicologist and teacher who had studied philosophy at Heidelberg and had a special interest in English music.

[43] Evgenii Braudo, 'Angliiskaia muzyka na sovremennom etape dva radiovechera', Govorit SSSR March 1934, p. 32.

[44] Ibid.

[45] I have been unable to find any review of this concert, and the Philharmonia records for this season give only complete works listing, not specific concert dates.

[46] See Fairclough, Classics for the Masses, p. 157.

[47] Grigorii Shneerson, Vercherniaia Moskva, 23 May 1943.

[48] See Fairclough, Classics for the Masses, pp. 216-221.

[49] It was published under this title as a thin booklet by the Komitet po delam vysshei shkoly pri SSK SSSR.

[50] For details, see Fairclough, 'From Détente to Cold War: Anglo-Soviet Musical Exchanges in the Late Stalin Period', in Fairclough, ed., Twentieth-Century Music and Politics, Farnham, 2013, pp. 37-56.

[51] This concert was not reviewed in any of the major newspapers or journals so far as I have been able to establish.

[52] See Fairclough, Classics for the Masses pp. 178-182, 'From Détente to Cold War', pp. 37-56 and also with Louise Wiggins, 'Friendship of the Musicians: Anglo-Soviet Musical Exchanges 1938-1948', in Simo Mikkonen and Pekka Suutari, eds., Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Exchanges and the Cold War, Farnham, 2016, pp. 29-48.

[53] By the 1920s in Britain, too, Elgar's stock had fallen, to the point where some musicians expressed surprise that he had even lived so long. The journal The Musical Times dedicated most of its April 1934 issue to his memory; its opening editorial notes that Elgar's last important work (the Cello Concerto) had been composed in 1919, and that his continued physical existence, and appearances at the podium even struck younger British composers as somehow miraculous – as though Beethoven himself might well come on stage after him. See W. McN. (William McNaught) and H. G. (Harvey Grace), 'Edward Elgar. June 2 1837 – February 23 1934', Musical Times vol. 75, 1934, pp. 305-313, especially p. 307.

[54] See Patrick Zuk, 'Musical Modernism in the Mirror of the Myaskovsky-Prokof'ev Correspondence', in Christoph Flamm et al, eds., Russian Emigré Culture: Conservatism or Evolution?, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2013, pp. 229-244. Prokof'ev had written in horror to Miaskovskii complaining of the 'clumsy, deadly, influence of Glazunov' in his latest work (the Fifth Symphony, 1918).

[55] See Robert Ridenour, Nationalism, Modernism and Personal Rivalry in Nineteenth-Century Russian Music Ann Arbor: 1981, pp. 83-85.

[56] Modest Tchaikovsky, The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, ed. and trans. Roa Newmarch, Oregon: 2004, p. 241.

[57] See in particular Marina Frolova-Walker, Russian Music and Nationalism from Glinka to Stalin, New Haven and London: 2007.

[58] For an excellent account of this, see Marina Frolova-Walker, 'Soviet Music in Post-Soviet Musicology: the First Twenty Years and Beyond', in Frolova-Walker and Patrick Zuk, Russian Music Since 1917: Reappraisal and Rediscovery, New York: 2017, pp. 76-102.

[59] See Ralph Vaughan Williams, National Music London: 1932.

[60] For quotes, see Zuk, 'Musical Modernism in the Mirror of the Myaskovsky-Prokof'ev Correspondence' pp. 233 and 237. For comments on Mahler and Strauss, see Semen Shlifshtein ed., N. Ia. Miaskovskii: Sobranie materialov v dvukh tomakh, ii (Moscow, 1964), p. 106 and Ol′ga Lamm, Stranitsy tvorcheskoi biografii Miaskovskogo (Moscow: 1989), p. 243. I thank Patrick Zuk for these references.